

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

5 1. A system for controllably dispensing a consumable product, said system comprising:

a dispenser for receiving a prepackaged supply of a consumable product, wherein said dispenser is operable to selectively perform at least one process utilizing said consumable product;

10 a controller for transmitting control signals to control the operation of said dispenser; and

a product data interface in data communication with said controller, for receiving at least one product data parameter from a product data source associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product, wherein said at least one data parameter 15 is selectively utilizable by said controller for controlling said dispenser.

2. The system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said product data interface comprises an electronic reader for reading said at least one product data parameter from an electronic data storage device associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product.

20 3. The system as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said product data interface comprises a magnetic data card reader for reading said at least one product data parameter from a magnetic data card associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product.

25 4. The system as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said product data interface comprises an integrated chip reader for reading said at least one product data parameter from an integrated chip associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product.

5. The system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said product data interface is in data communication with said controller via an air interface.

6. The system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said product data interface automatically reads said at least one product data parameter from said product data source upon said prepackaged supply of said consumable product being interfaced with said dispenser.

5 7. The system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said controller is operative to utilize said at least one data parameter to configure said dispenser according to a predetermined protocol.

10 8. The system as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said controller is operative to disable said dispenser when said at least one data parameter is outside a predetermined acceptable range.

9. The system as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:

a memory structure in communication with said controller, wherein said memory structure is operative to store at least one of: product data information and dispenser configuration information.

15 10. The system as claimed in Claim 7, wherein said memory structure is in communications with said controller via a communications network.

11. The system as claimed in Claim 7, further comprising:

a user interface, said user interface providing at least a first user output and at least a first user input.

20 12. The system as claimed in Claim 11, wherein user instructions associated with said at least one product data parameter are provided via said user interface.

13. The system as claimed in Claim 12, wherein said user instructions prompt a user to enter information for use in configuring said dispenser for use with said consumable product.

14. A method for dispensing a consumable product through a dispensing system, wherein said dispensing system includes a configurable controller for selectively controlling the operation of the dispensing system, said method comprising;

5 interfacing a prepackaged supply of a consumable product to a product input port of said dispensing system;

reading, at a product data interface of said dispensing system, at least one data parameter from a product data source associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product;

10 utilizing said at least one data parameter from said product data source to configure said dispensing system to utilize said supply of said consumable product.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein said step of reading comprises interfacing a product data source from said prepackaged supply of said consumable product with said product data interface.

16. The method of Claim 15, wherein said step of reading further comprises 15 removing said product data source from said prepackaged supply of said consumable product prior to said step of interfacing.

17. The method of Claim 14, wherein said step of reading comprises reading a magnetic data card associated with said prepackaged supply of said consumable product.

18. The method of Claim 14, wherein said step of reading at least one data 20 parameter comprises reading at least one of product data information and dispensing system calibration information.

19. The method of Claim 18, wherein said product data information includes at least one of product identification information, product expiration information, product ingredient information and volumetric data information.

25 20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising, utilizing said product data information to access additional information for use in configuring said dispensing system.

21. The method of Claim 19, wherein said dispensing system calibration information includes dosage information for said consumable product.

22. The method of Claim 14, wherein said step of reading said at least one data parameter from a product data source further comprises:

providing a display at a user interface prompting at least one user input.

23. The method of Claim 22, wherein said utilizing step comprises utilizing
5 said at least one data parameter and said at least one user input to configure said dispensing system.

24. A system for controllably injecting a liquid additive into a liquid stream, comprising:

a replaceable prepackaged supply of liquid additive;

an injector in fluid communication with said supply of liquid additive, said

5 injector operable to inject a predetermined dosage of said liquid additive into said fluid stream in response to received control signals;

a product data interface for receiving at least one product data parameter from a data source associated with said prepackaged supply of liquid additive;

a controller in data communication with said product data interface, wherein said

10 controller is operative to utilize said at least one product data parameter in creating said control signals for use in selectively operating said injector.

25. The system of Claim 24, wherein said product data interface comprises an electronic reader operable to read said at least one data parameter from an electronic data storage source.

15 26. The system of Claim 25, wherein said electronic reader comprises a magnetic card reader and said electronic data storage source comprises a magnetic data card.

27. The system of Claim 24, wherein said data source is associated with the packaging of said prepackaged supply of liquid additive.

20 28. The system of Claim 27, wherein said data source is selectively removable from said packaging for interfacing with said product data interface.

29. The system of Claim 24, wherein said controller is operative to compare each said product data parameter to a corresponding allowable data parameter range.

25 30. The system of Claim 29, wherein said controller is operative to disable said system if at least one said product data parameter is outside said allowable data parameter range.